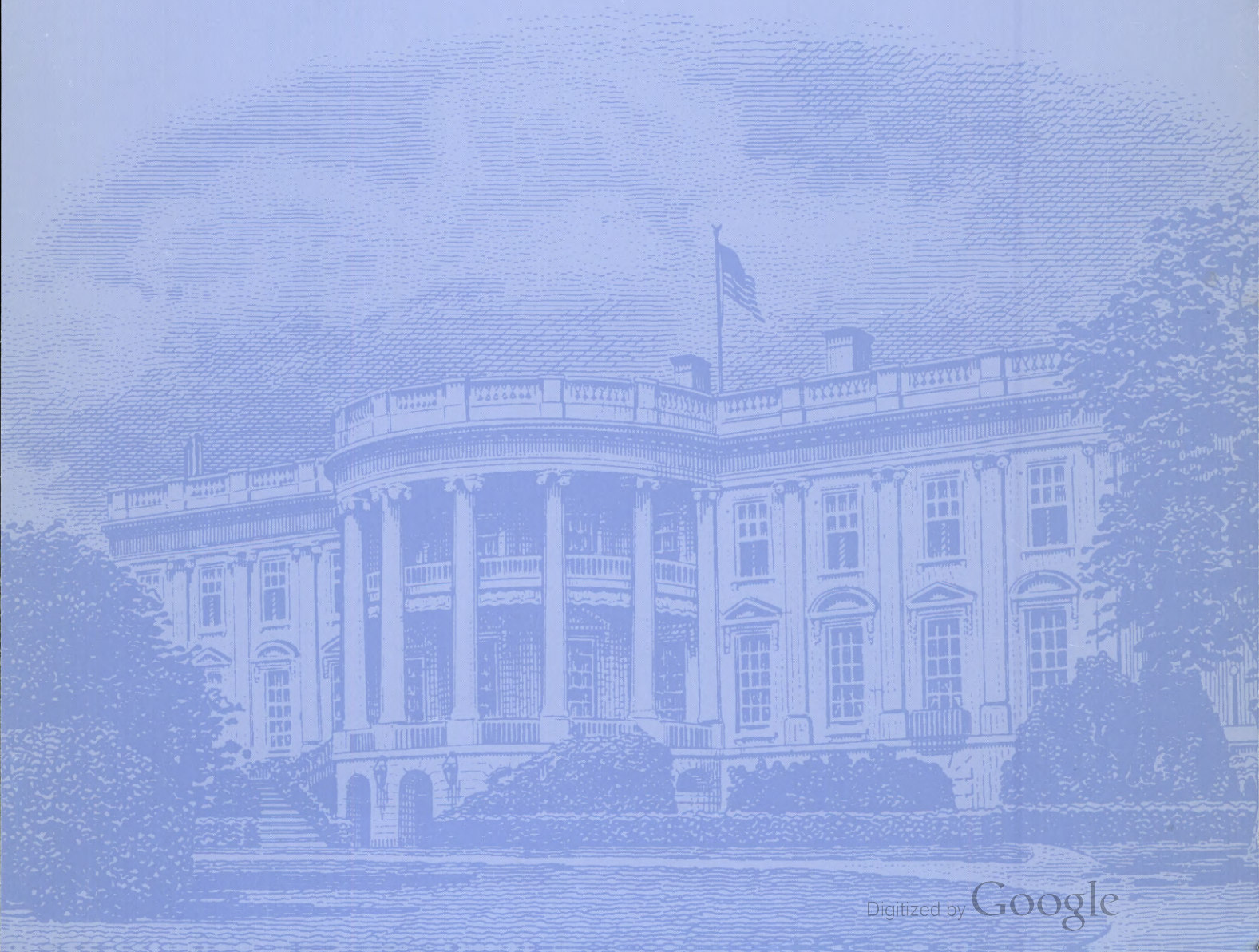
Handling and Maintaining the WHITE HOUSE COLLECTION



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Handling and Maintaining the WHITE HOUSE COLLECTION

The White House is a residence, a place for entertaining and events, and an historic site and museum open to visitors. For these many functions, it is filled with an outstanding collection of paintings, sculpture, furniture, and decorative objects, many with a long history of White House use.

The staff has an obligation to preserve the objects in the White House to the best of its abilities. Each time an object is refinished, repaired, or even reupholstered, its integrity — how close it remains to its original condition — is compromised. The object is never as genuine after such conservation or reupholstery. Moreover, this work is expensive, as are upholstery fabrics.

To fulfill this mission of preserving the historic White House collection, we would appreciate your assistance and cooperation in following the guidelines in this booklet.

The Ushers Office
Office of the Curator
1997

General Rules

Staff should never sit on, lean on, or rub their hands over objects, nor lay things on them.

1 Avoid unnecessary contact

a. Although some use of the furnishings by guests is unavoidable, use by the staff should be avoided. An exception would be if you are expected to sit during a meeting in one of the rooms.

b. Do not sit on the seat furniture in the Ground Floor Corridor, Diplomatic Reception Room, or any other area waiting for tours to end or other events to begin or end.

c. Do not lay coats, hats, briefcases, parcels, etc., on tables or chairs.

d. Contact with upholstery fabrics - oils or moisture from hands or hair; abrasion by clothing, jewelry, etc. - causes cumulative damage. A piece may have to be entirely reupholstered just because of damage at a few sensitive places, especially the tops of chairs and sofas where people are prone to touch, rub, or lean.

e. Oils or moisture from hands are also harmful to wood finishes, especially gilding.

2 Be careful in handling and storage

Avoid unnecessary rushing. Place objects down gently

If you have any questions or concerns about how to handle and how or where to store objects, please ask the Curator's Office or Usher's Office for guidance.

3 Quickly report any damage and save all detached pieces

4 Notify the curators whenever an object is relocated within the White House or before it is sent to offsite storage

Art Works

1 Be sure your hands are clean and dry

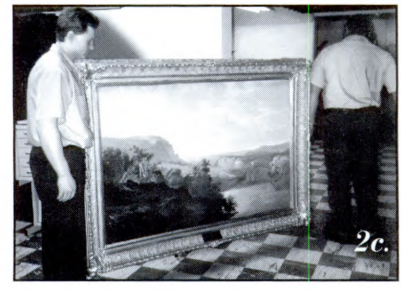
Moisture can cause damage to the gilding on frames. Dirt from hands can be imbedded in sculpture.

2 Handle paintings carefully

a. Be sure the work is secure in its frame.

b. Do not touch the surface of the work.

c. Carry by frame upright, one hand at each side or one hand each at top and bottom.
For larger paintings, one person at each side.

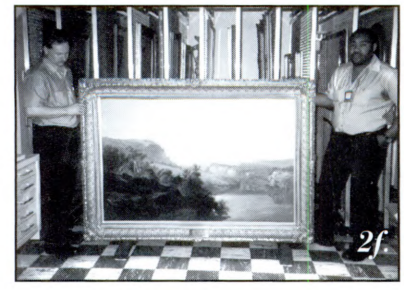


d. Avoid contact of work or frame with jewelry, belt buckles, keys, etc.

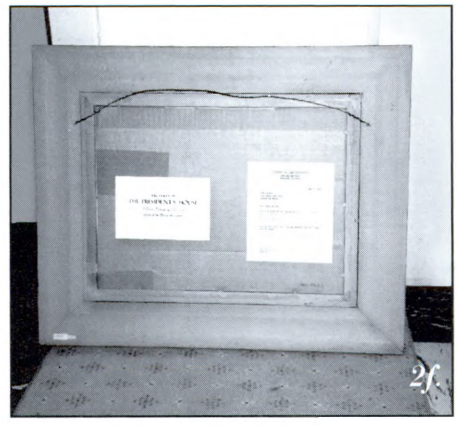
e. Avoid contact with delicate or loose frame carvings.

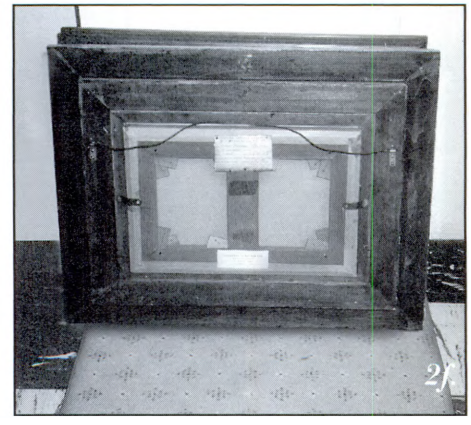
f. If necessary, lean temporarily in a place away from sharp points, such as the corners of tables, and in a manner so that it will not slide or fall.

If necessary, lean two objects face to face. Do not put frames down corner first. Ideally, if works cannot be hung, they should stand on a rug or pad; two works standing together should be separated by a sheet of cardboard.



g. Do not clean paintings or frames. Curatorial staff or a conservator will handle the proper cleaning of paintings with soft brushes and the cleaning of frames with soft brushes in conjunction with a vacuum.





3 Clean framing glass or plexiglas carefully

a. Be sure to use only plexiglas cleaner on plexiglas.

b. Apply glass or plexiglas cleaner to a cloth before cleaning the surface. Never apply liquid or spray directly to the surface to avoid dribbling onto or into the frame. Avoid moisture contact with frame gilding.

4 Handle sculpture carefully

a. For smaller works, carry by hand, only one at a time, providing proper support. One hand should be placed underneath, the other on the side towards the top. The object should then be drawn into the crux of the arm and against the body for added protection. Avoid contact with jewelry, belt buckles, pens, keys, etc.

b. Avoid picking up or carrying by projecting parts. Even on a bronze work, pieces can be broken off.

c. Larger works should be moved on a blanket-padded cart. Move carefully and as slowly as possible to avoid or lessen shock damage which is possible even on a cart should it bump into something.

d. Do not clean sculpture. Curatorial staff will handle the proper cleaning with soft brushes in conjunction with a vacuum or careful use of deionized water. Dusting with a cloth can grind dirt into marble and porcelain.

4a.

Furniture

1. Be sure your hands are clean and dry

2. Remove items supported on the piece before moving

3. Remove or secure loose components before moving

4a.

a. On desks, bookcases, clocks, etc., remove finials, pediment, bonnet, pendulum, etc., and examine to see if case sections are separable.

b. Check drawers and compartments for items which might be damaged or cause damage in a move.

c. Remove drawers to lighten the load, or tie them closed to prevent them from slipping out in transit.

d. Remove marble or glass tops. Carry and store vertically to prevent breakage from its own weight.

4. Carry by strong structural points

4a.

a. Seat furniture - lift by seat frame; avoid contact with upholstery fabrics as much as possible.

Small chairs - one person may lift from under the seat frame. Never lift by the arms or legs, or by the rails or other elements of an open back.

Larger chairs, settees, sofas - two people lift from under the seat frame. Do not carry by the arms or legs.

4a.

b. Tables - do not lift by the top; be careful to tie or hold securely such moving parts as gatelegs and folding leaves.

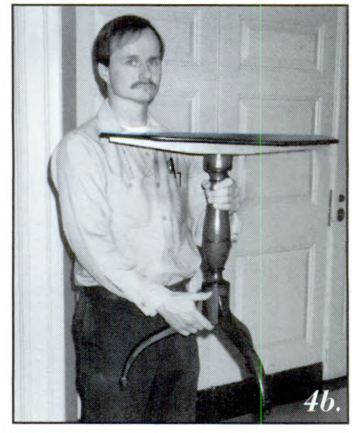
Small tables - one person may lift from under the table frame or by the pedestal.
Larger tables - two or more people lift under the table frame.

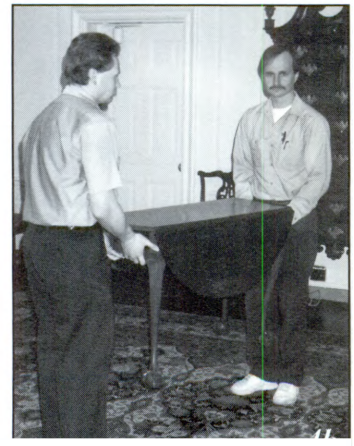
Exceptions are the dining tables which may be too unwieldy to carry by the pedestals alone.

4a.

c. Case furniture (chests, desks, cabinets) - two or more people lift by the underside of the case.

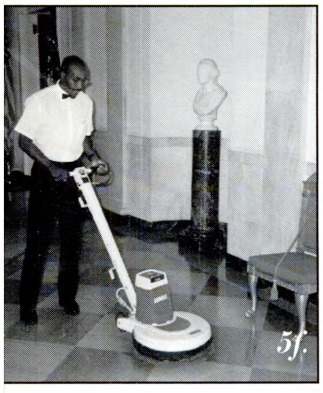
Always be sure that loose elements are removed or secured, including the contents of drawers. Always examine to see if case sections are separable. Always secure hinged components such as doors.


4b.



Furniture

5a.


5f.

5 Clean carefully

a. Dust with a soft, dry, lint-free cloth.
Avoid dusting more fragile surfaces - painted decoration, loose or brass inlays - with anything but a soft brush.

b. Do not use any liquid or aerosol polishes.

c. Do not place containers of any cleaning product on any object, especially tables without glass tops or upholstery of seat furniture.

d. For glass or plexiglas protective tops on tables, chests, etc., apply the appropriate glass or plexiglas cleaner to a cloth before cleaning the surface.
Never apply liquid or spray directly to the surface to avoid contact with unprotected wooden surfaces.
Do not use these sorts of cleaners on mirror glass.

e. Be careful moving floral arrangements. Spilled liquids can even seep under protective glass tops and cause severe damage if not dried up quickly.

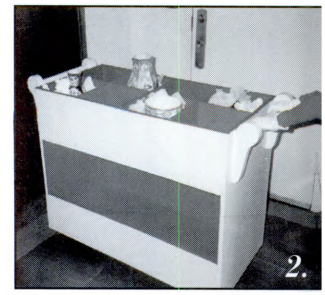
f. Do not let vacuum cleaners, mops, or floor buffers make contact with the feet and lower portions of any piece of furniture. It is best to keep such equipment least 6 inches away from any object. Cleaning under furniture should be done by hand, or first the piece should be moved carefully. Avoid dragging cords for vacuum cleaners or buffers against objects.

g. Do not polish metal clock cases or the metal components of furniture - mounts, feet, etc. - without permission from the Curator's Office.

6 Quickly report any damage and save all detached pieces

This includes stains, wear, tears, loose trim, etc., on upholsteries.

Silver, Vermeil, Porcelain, & Glass objects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2a.

1 Be sure your hands are clean and dry

Use gloves or a clean dry cloth when carrying all metals - silver, vermeil, gilded bronze - because oils from even clean, dry skin can be damaging to metals.

2 For larger objects, carry by hand only one at a time or place in a cart

Several small objects may be carried together in a secure tub, basket, etc., if separated by clean soft cloths, tissue paper, etc.

Small objects, especially the vermeil on the Second Floor, must not be carried in a cluster by one person. Those objects may be moved for cleaning by placing them carefully, not stacked, in a tub or basket.
Do not allow objects to protrude from the container to avoid accidental contact with door frames, etc.

3.

Exceptions would be such objects as:

a. plates or bowls which can be carried safely in a single stack no taller than can be securely and comfortably held within the grasp of both hands.

b. very small or slender objects, such as a cup or small vase, which can be securely held in one hand and placed down onto a surface without danger of tipping over.

c. two objects of small to moderate size may be carried by one person only if a second person is available to hand over the second object, open doors, turn on lights, and relieve the carrier of one of the objects once their destination is reached.

3.

3 Provide proper support when carrying an object

For carrying by hand, one hand should be placed underneath, the other on the side towards the top. The object should then be drawn into the crux of the arm and against the body for added protection. Avoid contact with jewelry, belt buckles, pens, keys, etc.

The exception would be a container filled with flowers which, in order to prevent disruption of the arrangement or spillage of water, should be carried upright, away from the body, but with the hands in the same position. Silver or gilded metal containers, however, should still be carried using a clean towel or other cloth to minimize skin-metal contact.

4 Avoid picking up or carrying an object by its handles or other projecting decorative parts

Such parts - handles, finials, spouts, etc. - are by nature vulnerable to breakage, especially since they are sometimes attached to the body, rather than cast or molded as a whole. Because of such structural fragility, they often have been subject to repairs which makes them even more fragile.

Silver, Vermeil, Porcelain, & Glass objects

5 Beware of removable parts

a. Lids - should be removed and carried separately.

b. Bases - such objects as tureens and wine coolers often have separate bases. Frequently these appear to be attached because they fit tightly or have adhered from corrosion or deposits of foreign matter. These objects should not be picked up by the body whereby the base could drop off. They may be picked up, however, as a unit from beneath the base, with attention to the possibility of the body separating from the base.

7a.

6 Avoid carrying objects by way of stairways

The potential for dropping an object is much higher when mounting or descending a flight of stairs than when traveling by elevator.

7 Avoid stacking objects in storage

The stacking of objects poses serious problems of contact abrasion and possible damage from slippage.

Exceptions are:

7a.

a. Objects which conveniently stack, such as plates or bowls. Ideally, a layer of cloth or tissue should be placed between such objects. For long-term storage of metals, this layer should be of an acid-free material. For short-term storage, any soft, pliable material is better than abrasive metal-to-metal contact.

b. Due to limitations on storage capacity, small objects which may need to be stored inside larger ones, but only if properly held in place by cloth or tissue packing. Cabinets or shelves where such storage is necessary should be marked to warn of this condition to avoid dropping the smaller object if the larger object is turned upside down.

8 Limit the exposure of objects to corrosive conditions -

such as moisture, body oils, or organic or acidic materials

a. The moisture and oils deposited by human hands is corrosive of all objects, but especially of metalware. Try to carry metal objects with gloves or a soft cloth.

b. A liner should be provided for every container used for flowers or other plant material. Modern liners should be made to replace the gilded or silver ones original to tureens, wine coolers, etc. An original metal liner is an integral component of the piece as an historic object and must be preserved.

c. Liners should be removed from the containers during periods of storage, especially if plant materials or florist foam are to remain in the liners.

8b.

Silver, Vermeil, Porcelain, & Glass objects *continued*

d. When emptied, containers should be carefully cleaned with a mild soap in water and dried thoroughly, interior and exterior - to remove any moisture or residues which may have dropped from the plant materials, been spilled from the liners when inserted or removed, or been picked up from counter tops.

e. Avoid storing containers in the refrigerator because of potential damage from moisture or the temperature or humidity change when removed to a room environment.

f. Before display, containers should be wiped as clean as is feasible when filled in order to further reduce exposure to moisture or residues. The accumulation of modest amounts of such contaminants during display is inevitable, but will be of minor impact if the containers are kept clean at other times.

g. Avoid contact with unsealed wood, rubber, fabrics treated with fire retardants, newsprint, plastic wraps, and hot glue.

h. Avoid prolonged contact with foodstuffs, especially sugar, salt, and fruit.

9 **Clean carefully - slippery when wet!**

Ceramics and glass - generally a damp cloth is enough. If needed, wash with a mild detergent (e.g. Ivory) in lukewarm water, thoroughly rinsed off and dried with soft cloths. Avoid harsher products such as Windex.

Silver and vermeil - For objects which have not been lacquered (check with Curators Office or Housekeeper), clean with approved polishing products, thoroughly rinsed off and dried with soft cloths. Polish residues can be very corrosive if left in crevices. Water drippage, sometimes containing polish traces, can badly damage furniture, cloth-lined shelves, etc.

Gilded bronze - These objects do not need to be polished.
Never use any polishing products on them.

10 **Quickly report any damage and save all detached pieces**

Draperies and Upholsteries

a. These fabrics should be carefully cleaned with a soft-brush vacuum, not with a dust cloth.

b. For emergency cleaning, blot spillage with a clean white cloth, then spray with clean water and blot again. Repeat as needed.

c. Quickly report any damage, including stains, wear, tears, loose trim, etc., and save all detached pieces.

Rugs

a. Do not straighten by kicking with your heel.

b. For emergency cleaning, blot spillage with a clean white cloth, then spray with clean water and blot again. Repeat as needed.

c. Before removal to storage, rugs should be thoroughly vacuumed.

Candles in Metal Candelabra and Candlesticks

Candles should never be jammed down into the candle cups. This puts great strain on the arms and can contribute to bending and breaking.
The metal cup liners should be removed, the candles inserted and secured, and then the liners restored to the candle cups.

Fireplace Equipment

Polishes used to clean brass fireplace equipment must be thoroughly rinsed off and the pieces thoroughly dried before returning them to any marble hearth.

Objects to Offsite Storage

1 **Notify the curators whenever an object is to be sent to offsite storage**

Receipts must be prepared for objects in transit

2 **Properly prepare objects being sent to storage**

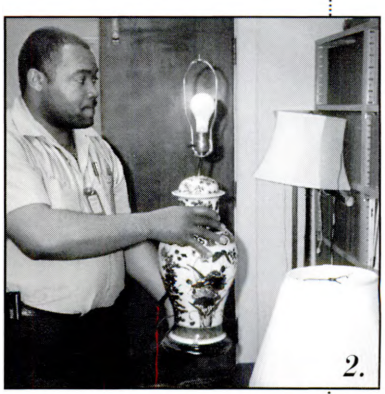
a. Small objects should be securely packed in a sturdy box.

b. Furniture should be covered with plastic or muslin. A box of clear bags, and often some loose extra bags, are kept behind the Curators Office. Be sure drawers and compartments are empty before securing drawers and doors with muslin or linen straps.

c. Draperies should be cleaned or dry cleaned, then carefully boxed or wrapped in plastic.

3 **Preserve packing materials for objects received from offsite storage**

Give to the curators or return to offsite storage such expensive acid-free materials as drapery boxes, rug tubes, etc.



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